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To Travel or to Compete: Motivations of Masters Swimmers

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The underlying motivations behind participating in a sports event such as a swim meet are complex and varied especially for adult participants. These motivations may be related to the thrill of competition or excitement at traveling to a new pool or aquatic facility. Investigations of motivations behind participation can enable meet directors and aquatic facility managers to create more memorable experiences that boost participation and encourage repeat visitors who produce social and economic benefits for the aquatic facility and event. We measured motivations of Masters swimmers using the Participant Motivation Questionnaire (PMQ) modified for swimmers and the Travel Career Ladder (TCL) at the 2006 US Masters Swimming Short Course Championships. Descriptive and multivariate statistics revealed that Masters swimmers participated primarily for competitive reasons with travel only as a secondary motivator. Participating to be with other members of their team was revealed as another important motivation.

Understanding the motivations behind swim participants is a complex phenomenon. They are influenced by a host of behavioral factors that are different for each person and may shift across the lifespan (Hastings, Kurth, Schloder, & Cyr, 1995; Vallerand & Losier, 1999). Therefore, what may make one person choose to attend a special event at an aquatic facility such as a swim meet may not be the same for another person. One way for aquatic facilities to be financially solvent and to achieve prestige includes the hosting of high level swimming competitions or other related events. An understanding of how to attract and keep swimmers coming back is essential for the ongoing vitality of an aquatic facility and for annual events. For the home team there also are motivations to host these events based on perceptions such as home pool advantage, ease of access, and overall savings in cost and expenditure of resources.

Hosting a sporting event is viewed as a vehicle for economic and community development (Gibson, 1998). Past research examining the economic impacts of specific sport tourism events from the host community perspective found that residents view the event favorably and was more likely to volunteer their time to the event (Soutar & McLeod, 1993; Walo, Bull, & Breen, 1996). In addition to the above mentioned socioeconomic benefits of hosting a sporting event, the event

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itself can greatly contribute to the local economy and serve as a "catalyst" or springboard for future economic development (Wilson, 2006). Swimming as a sporting event has been found to greatly contribute to the economy of the local community. Wilson (2006) studied four separate swimming competitions and found that the swimming participants themselves spent a significant amount of dollars that stayed in the local community.

Because the bid process for sporting events can be complex and since swim participants can pick and choose which ones they want to attend or not attend, an understanding of their motivations to participate becomes crucial. It is hoped that through understanding competitors' motivations, facility managers "can become better architects" of events so that children as well as adults "can reap the full benefits" of the experience (Vallerand & Losier, 1999). This knowledge would help attract greater numbers to the event and help the athletes fully benefit from their experience.

Previous research in the area of motivation for the sports participant show that motivators can be intrinsic in nature (to experience, to know, to accomplish and to be physically active) along with those that speak to self-determination (Gill, Gross, & Huddleston, 1983). In addition, sport participants can seek extrinsic motivators such as to win trophies and obtain social prestige. It is a widely accepted notion that individuals travel to compete in their sport of choice (Gibson, 1998). Swimming competitions are held locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally. Therefore motivations specifically related to travel (e.g., the need to escape, to get away from normal everyday demands) could play a role in explaining why one event may be selected over another. Moreover, it is theorized that as individuals travel more often to participate in sports events or for other reasons, their motivations shift and change with each new experience (Pearce & Lee, 2005).

Much of the research conducted on swimming participants has concentrated on youth (Weed & Bull, 2004). Age group swimmers do not often make active decisions about which facility or event to compete in because adults (e.g., parents, coach) usually make the decisions for them. The decision making of the adult swim participant, therefore, is slightly more complex. Adults have the autonomy, decision-making power, and financial resources to decide at which events and facilities they would like to compete. They can choose to which destination they want to travel based on a range of motivations. Swimming is a sport where persons can participate across the lifespan and is popular with adults of all ages (Hasting et al., 1995). Therefore, further research is needed to address the diversity of motivations for adult sport participants (Gill, Williams, Dowd, Beaudoin, & Martin, 1996; Vallerand & Losier, 1999).

The United States Masters Swimming, Inc. (USMS) was founded in 1970 and operates in fifty-three regions throughout the U.S. with an annual average membership exceeding 42,000 individuals (USMS, 2005). The mission of the USMS is to "promote fitness and health in adults by offering and supporting masters swimming programs" (USMS, 2005). The organization achieves this through providing administrative structure and support, organized workouts, competitions, and clinics/workshops for adults ranging in age from 18 and up. It is a goal of the organization to help swimmers improve their levels of fitness, achieve personal goals, and offer opportunities for socialization (USMS, 2005).

USMS offers competitions at local, regional, national, and international levels. There are two seasons of competition within Masters swimming, short course and long course. Long course season generally runs over the summer months and is held in pools that are 50 m in length. The short course season spans the autumn through spring seasons during the months of September through May and involves competitions held primarily in facilities 25 yards in length. The National Short Course Championships are held annually as a culminating event for the short course season. The event is held at a different destination each year, reaching all areas of the United States. Even though Masters swimming membership is consistently strong, attendance at the championship event varies widely each year.

It is uncertain if fluctuations in attendance at this championship event are normal or if they should be attributed to specific factors such as the excitement over the destination or the thrill of competing in a national swimming competition. USMS swimmers must be members to compete, and up until 2002, must have achieved a qualifying time standards to attend the national championship. After 2002, the rule was changed to allow any registered USMS swimmer to compete in up to three individual events and relays without having to make the qualifying standard. Swimmers achieving qualifying times can compete in additional events. Even though swimmers automatically are eligible for three events while others may qualify, not all choose to attend the event. An understanding behind the motivational factors could greatly aid USMS officials in planning future championships and discover the likelihood that swimmers will travel to any selected destination.

Sport and Travel Motivations

Sport and tourism as separate activities involve a complex set of motivations (Weed & Bull, 2004). On one hand, travel motivators can be explained by the desire to seek new and different experiences, the need to escape from routine, and a desire to meet people, whereas motivations to participate in a sporting activity can be driven by the desire to win, to be with the team, or to improve the level of fitness (Hastings et al., 1995; Weed & Bull, 2004).

Early research on the motivation of swimmers focused on the identification of the internal and environmental factors that influenced competitive performance for younger participants (Brodkin & Weiss, 1990). Embedded in self-determination theory, individuals who have positive experiences will have beneficial effects on motivation. Likewise, a negative experience will have a detrimental effect on motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Put in the context of a swim participant, positive internal and external influences thus will make swimmers more motivated and thus they will perform better in competitions. These intrinsic and extrinsic motivators were not thought to stand alone; rather, they occur simultaneously in the sport participant and influence behavior in combination with other factors (Vallerand & Losier, 1999).

Later, research on the motivations of swim participants focused on describing individual motivating factors. These influences were recognized as motivation for maintaining or improving fitness, adding to skill development, achievement/

status, experiencing a challenge, being with a team, being with friends, and having fun (Brodkin & Weiss, 1990; Gill, Gross, & Huddleston, 1983; Gould, Feltz, & Weiss, 1985; Klint & Weiss, 1987). As a result, several measurement instruments emerged in the literature including Gill and Deeter's (1988) Sport Orientation Questionnaire assessing competitive factors, Duda and Tappe's (1989) Personal Incentives for Exercise Questionnaire to examine participation motives, and Gill, Gross, and Huddleston's (1983) Participant Motivation Questionnaire that studied a range of motivating factors.

More recently, the literature on swimming motivation has focused on adult participants. It was recognized that the adult sport participant may be influenced by a diversity of motivating influences that are different from their younger cohorts. For example, Brodkin and Weiss (1990) found that adults rated health and fitness as more important than having social status as a result of participating in their sport or having fun as the younger aged swimmers reported. Other variables were revealed as significant when examining the motivation of the adult sport participant. Gill, Williams, Dowd, Beaudoin, and Martin (1996) found gender differences. Women reported to be more interested in fitness and health issues, while males were more inclined to compete to win. In addition, the age of the adult swimmer became an important variable. Older adults reported being motivated more to have fun, while younger adults in their 20s and 30s were more motivated to be with friends and family (Brodkin & Weiss, 1990). Moreover, past experience with the sport also became a contributing factor for motivating the adult sport participant. Hastings, Kurth, Schloder, and Cyr (1995) discovered that for adult Masters swimming participants, their past experience with the Masters swimming program and number of swim meets participated in that year significantly affected their motivation.

Past experience with a sport may have an influence on an individual's travel behavior as well. McGehee, Yoon, and Cardenas (2003) found that running competitors participated in more than one race a year that required overnight travel. Interestingly, they found a difference in the participation level of those traveling to participate in a sport and their past experience with the sport. Runners classified as having "medium" involvement in their sport traveled more often to competitions than those who were "highly" involved. Thus, those who were motivated most to compete in their sport traveled less to various competitions. Investigation on the topic of sport tourism is still emerging, and there is limited research on the active sport tourist (Gibson, 1998). Since many sporting events involve travel, many more investigations into this concept are needed.

Research on travel motivation is vast and many theories exist, such as Plog's (2002) psychographic model of venturers and dependables, Iso-Ahola's (1982) optimal arousal theory, Beard and Ragheb's (1983) leisure motivation approach, Kelly's (1972) theory of leisure types, and push/pull travel motivations by Uysal and Jurowski (1993). The travel career ladder, however, is a widely used theory to describe the relationship between individuals' past experiences and their motivations to travel (Ryan, 1998). The theory states that as individuals collect a history of travel experiences, they seek higher satisfaction in their travel behaviors (Pearce & Lee, 2005). The model is based on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. At the bottom of the ladder are basic travel motivators such as seeking novelty, excitement, and external stimulation. The ultimate goals, at the top of the ladder, include intrinsic

motivators such as increased self-esteem and fulfillment of dreams (Ryan, 1998). It is unknown if the motivation of the sport tourists, with their collection of travel experiences competing in their sport, can be explained with this model.

Could the motivation to travel be a possible explanatory factor for the adult swim participant? Aquatic facility directors, tourism planners, and swim event organizers can benefit from a better understanding of individuals who travel to compete in a sporting event. The knowledge of the types of motivating factors that attract participants can encourage wider participation, provide a more satisfying experience, and persuade swimmers to return to certain venues. This would result in not only a greater financial return and prestige for the aquatic facility but possibly for the wider travel destination as well.

This study investigated the relationships between travel and competitive motivational factors. Specifically, the study asked the following two research questions:

1. What is the profile of the 2006 USMS Short Course participants?
2. What are the relationships between gender, age, past involvement in swimming events, and travel and competition motivators?

Method

The participants in this study were individuals competing in the 2006 USMS Short Course Championships held in Coral Springs, Florida, May 11–14. We solicited participants throughout the competition at the results table and in the seating areas on the pool deck. We received 394 usable surveys as part of this convenience sample.

The paper and pencil survey addressed both travel and competition factors. The travel motivation questions were borrowed from the Travel Career Scale created by Pearce and Lee (2005). The Travel Career Scale was based on the travel career ladder theoretical model. In this scale, the motivating factor of travel for stimulation was found to be a stronger motivating factor for those who travel more often than others. The motivating questions on travel for novelty, escape, and stimulation were selected from the Travel Career Scale. The motivating factors of travel for novelty and escape were selected as they were not found to be influenced by an individual's history of travel. Therefore, these two factors may be more universal travel motivators regardless of a travel history (Pearce & Lee, 2005). Travel for stimulation questions were selected as they represented a higher level of experience seeking according to the model. If participants' motivations were influenced by past travel experiences, the scores for this particular construct should be higher.

Motivators addressing sport competition were selected from the Participation Motivation Questionnaire (PMQ) developed by Gill, Gross, and Huddleston (1983). The PMQ addresses basic motives for participation in sporting activities and has been used in past research on the adult swim participant (Brodkin & Weiss, 1990). The domains of social development, the desire to win, and fitness goals were selected as they were found to be significant in adult swim participation motivation in past studies. Each question was presented on a five point Likert type scale with a 1 = *not at all important* and 5 = *very important*. The precursor "I

am participating in this USMS Nationals because . . . " was inserted before each qualifying statement.

Pilot Test

We pilot tested an initial version of the questionnaire with 25 individuals who were members of a USMS team at a Midwestern university. The pilot participants commented on the face and content validity of the instrument and recommended changes on the general appearance of the questionnaire, the wording of the directions, and demographic questions. The resulting revised questionnaire contained nine demographic questions on age, sex, ethnicity, education level, state of residence, number of swim meets competed in the last year, types of competitions competed in, past swim competition experience, and number of years registered with USMS. The remainder of the survey focused on 31 statements addressing both the travel and competition motivators.

Results

A profile of the participants was generated as well as descriptive information for each motivator question. An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was performed on the motivation statements. The purpose of the EFA was to group together correlated variables (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2001). We calculated a series of standard multiple regressions to examine relationships between travel and competition motivators.

Descriptive information of the participants is presented in Table 1. A total of 394 usable surveys revealed the typical participant to be Caucasian in ethnic origin, aged 35–54, held a minimum of a bachelor's degree, attended six or fewer swim meets in the past year, and most had past swim team experience, mostly in high school or college. The participants represented 38 U.S. states, the Bahamas, and international locations. A large number of participants (n = 69) had been USMS members for only one year; however, a larger plurality (n = 142) had been registered with USMS from two to six years.

On the overall motivation statements, the participants were in highest agreement on the competition factors. The participants believed the fitness statements were most important, specifically the desire to stay in shape and be physically fit. These reports were consistent with the findings of Brodkin and Weiss (1990) who reported that the fitness variables had the most influence on the motivation of the swimmer. On the other hand, the travel motivator of "the need to have unpredictable experiences" was reported to be the least important. Also ranked as not as important were other travel motivators such as having daring/adventuresome experiences, exploring the unknown, and traveling to not worry about the time. We have presented a complete list of the means and standard deviations for each motivation item in Table 2.

Before performing the exploratory factor analysis (EFA; see Table 3) and regression analyses, the data were tested to ascertain whether they met a number of assumptions. Surveys with any missing values were omitted, leaving a sufficiently large sample size (N = 374 for all factors) to meet the minimum number of cases recommended for EFA (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). Scatterplots revealed

Table 1 Demographics of the 2006 USMS Short Course Championship Participants

Sex	#	Ethnicity	#	State of residence	#
Male	214	African American	3	Alabama	2
Female	180	Asian	9	Alaska	1
Total:	394	Caucasian	357	Arizona	6
		Hispanic/Latino	10	Arkansas	3
Competing age group		Alaskan Native	2	California	30
18–24	30	Pacific Islander	3	Colorado	20
25–29	39	Other	6	Connecticut	2
30–34	31	Total:	390	Florida	75
35–39	42			Georgia	13
40–44	65	**Educational Level**		Hawaii	1
45–49	49	High School/GED	12	Idaho	1
50–54	42	Some college	36	Illinois	24
55–59	28	Bachelors degree	126	Indiana	13
60–64	29	Some graduate school	37	Kansas	1
65–69	17	Graduate degree	169	Kentucky	3
70–74	7	Other (dentistry, law school)	14	Louisiana	3
75–79	9	Totals:	394	Maryland	12
80–84	4			Massachusetts	8
85–89	1	**Number of competitions:**[a]		Michigan	13
Total:	393	0–3	139	Minnesota	7
		4–6	151	Missouri	6
Number of years		7–10	70	Nevada	2
USMS registered:		11–14	23	N. Hampshire	3
1	82	15 +	9	New Jersey	6
2–3	79	Totals:	392	New Mexico	4
4–5	47			New York	28
6–7	26	**Past swim experience:**[b]		N. Carolina	13
8–9	20	United States Swimming	140	N. Dakota	2
10–11	30	High School	234	Ohio	5
12–13	12	College	229	Oregon	6
14–15	13	USA Swimming	75	Pennsylvania	7
16+	85	Amateur Athletic Assoc.	164	Rhode Island	2
		None	36	S. Carolina	6
				Texas	11

Table 1 (*continued*)

Sex	#	Ethnicity	#	State of residence	#
				Vermont	1
				Virginia	18
				Washington	16
				Wisconsin	8
				Bahamas	6
				International	3

[a] = swim meets in the last year

[b] = lifetime experience

no instance of multivariate linearity. No univariate outliers were detected; however, four multivariate outliers were identified and deleted. These outliers were surveys whose respondents recorded the choice of *not at all important* for all of the items in the motivation section.

We determined the factors for the EFA with a SCREE plot, eigenvalues greater than one, and significant percentage of variance explained. We used principal axis factoring extraction with varimax rotation. Items with a loading of lower than .40 were eliminated (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). Five factors had eigenvalues greater than one and accounted for 60.6% of total variability. The SCREE plot revealed a gradual leveling off after the first five factors. Eleven items did not meet the factor loading criteria and were excluded. After the adjustments, the factor analysis was finalized with the five factors totaling 20 items. Factor scale reliabilities were computed to determine internal consistency using Cronbach's alpha coefficient (Cronbach, 1951). These coefficients ranged from .719 to .898 in value. In addition, a Cronbach alpha for all factors combined resulted in $\alpha = .897$, indicating a high internal consistency for all the factors. We named the resulting factors to be consistent with the factor names found in the literature: "travel for escape," "travel for stimulation," "competition for social development," "competition for fitness," and "competition to win" (Gill, Gross, & Huddleston, 1983; Pearce & Lee, 2005).

To determine the relationships between past experience in swimming and travel and sport motivators, two regression analyses were performed. Model 1 tested the relationships between sex, number of swim meets competed in the last year, the number of years registered with USMS, the competing age group, and how the three competition factors (i.e., social development, winning, fitness) may have influenced the motivation to travel. Model 2 tested the relationships between sex, number of swim meets competed in the last year, the number of years registered with USMS, the competing age group, and how travel motivation factors (for stimulation, escape) may have influenced motivation to compete in the championships.

Table 2 Overall Responses to Motivation Statements

Impact Area	M	*SD*
Travel for stimulation		
I like having unpredictable experiences.	2.76	1.198
I like experiencing thrills.	3.54	1.118
I like having daring/adventuresome experiences.	3.17	1.223
I like exploring the unknown.	3.17	1.134
I want a feeling of excitement.	4.12	2.193
I like being spontaneous.	3.38	1.124
Travel for escape		
I want to get away from everyday psychological stress/pressure.	3.65	1.186
I like to get away from the usual demands of life.	3.76	1.096
I like giving my mind a rest.	3.45	1.141
I want to get away from everyday physical stress/pressure.	3.56	1.156
I want to rest and relax.	3.29	1.149
I want to get away from daily routine.	3.63	1.100
I like not worrying about time.	3.16	1.167
Travel for novelty		
I like feeling the special atmosphere of the travel destination.	3.65	1.071
I like visiting places related to my personal interests.	3.47	1.015
I want to have fun.	4.40	0.692
I want to experience something different.	3.48	1.082
Competition for social development		
I want to improve my skills.	3.94	0.968
I like the teamwork.	2.86	1.111
I want to gain status or recognition.	3.93	0.921
I like being on a team.	4.04	0.921
Competition to win		
I like the rewards.	3.81	1.019
I want to go to a higher level with my swimming.	4.04	0.948
I like to win.	3.70	1.059
I like to compete.	4.27	0.773
I like to do something I am good at.	4.16	0.760

Table 2 (*continued*)

Impact Area	M	*SD*
Competition for fitness		
I like to use the equipment or facilities.	3.23	1.054
I like to get exercise.	4.45	0.750
I want to release tension.	3.63	1.097
I want to stay in shape.	4.58	0.586
I want to be physically fit.	4.59	0.616

Discussion

The regression analyses revealed a number of interesting findings. In model 1, the demographic factors of sex, the number of swim meets, competing age group, or years registered with USMS played no significant role in whether individuals were motivated to travel to the competition. The desire for social development and winning played a greater role. In other words, the participants most likely traveled to the championships to compete with their teammates and to do something they were good at. Model 2 displayed similar results. The demographic variables of sex, competing age group, years registered, and number of swim meets registered did not play a significant role in their decision to compete in the championships. Whether they were traveling for stimulation or escape were significant reasons for participating. In other words, participants who strove for excitement and yet felt the need to get away from their everyday life experiences were more likely to have traveled to compete in this national event.

It may appear, at least with the participants in the 2006 USMS Short Course Championships, that the travel career ladder did not adequately determine the motivations of these specific sport tourists. Descriptively, the participants expressed that on average, competition factors were more important than travel motivators. These factors also illustrated the highest amount of agreement and consistency across all respondents because they had the lowest standard deviations. In addition, the regression analysis revealed that not only did past experience in their sport (as measured by the number of years registered or number of swimming competitions competed in the past year) not play a significant role in whether the participants traveled to compete in the championships, but it also did not display any significance in whether they would compete (Table 4). It may be that the sample could be classified as highly involved in their sport consistent with results reported by McGehee, Yoon, and Cardenas (2003). Those who felt more motivated to compete in their sport of choice, in this case the 2006 short course swimming championships, were less likely to be motivated to travel for its own sake. Perhaps they felt that travel to the championships interfered with their swimming training and fitness levels, tending to cause them to want to travel less as a result, but to compete in events closer to their residence. On the other hand, because travel was a mandatory prerequisite to compete in these championships, it did not really constitute a significant explanatory factor.

Table 3 Results of EFA for Travel and Competition Motivations

	Factor 1: Travel for escape	Factor 2: Travel for stimulation	Factor 3: Competition for social development	Factor 4: Competition for fitness	Factor 5: Competition to win	h2
I like to get away from the usual demands of life.	.798	.168	.170	.061	.102	.772
I like giving my mind a rest.	.697	.255	.119	.141	.040	.595
I want to rest and relax.	.697	.183	-.005	.119	-.033	.629
I want to get away from daily routine.	.792	.148	.091	.110	.085	.685
I like not worrying about time.	.828	.140	.154	.026	.001	.583
I like having unpredictable experiences.	.170	.725	.077	.037	-.053	.565
I like experiencing thrills.	.149	.615	.138	.012	.328	.529
I like having daring/ adventuresome experiences.	.212	.753	.063	.070	.217	.674
I like exploring the unknown.	.275	.699	.085	.100	.114	.595
I like being spontaneous.	.252	.600	.167	.184	.053	.572
I want to improve my skills.	.202	.118	.823	.109	.050	.756
I want to gain status or recognition.	.117	.175	.872	.095	.165	.842
I like being on a team.	.128	.097	.793	.101	.258	.734

Table 3 ***(continued)***

	Factor 1: Travel for escape	Factor 2: Travel for stimulation	Factor 3: Competition for social development	Factor 4: Competition for fitness	Factor 5: Competition to win	h2
I like to get exercise.	.223	.217	.155	.543	.114	.429
I want to stay in shape.	.102	.049	.093	.959	.160	.967
I want to be physically fit.	.080	.042	.068	.919	.183	.892
I like to win.	-.083	.040	.028	.011	.677	.481
I like to compete.	-.014	.090	.090	.094	.676	.483
I like to do something I am good at.	.113	.057	.087	.133	.636	.463
Eigenvalue	6.979	2.551	1.688	1.534	1.192	
% of variance	30.341	11.089	7.338	6.670	5.182	
Cumulative %	30.341	41.431	48.769	55.439	60.621	
Cronbach's alpha	.898	.836	.898	.846	.719	.897*

Table 4 Regression Analysis of the Relationship Between Variables

Variable	*B*	*SE B*	β	Sig.
Model #1: DV: Motivation to travel				
Number of competitions	-.019	.040	-.024	.635
Years registered	.001	.005	-.015	.803
Sex	.019	.074	-.012	.796
Competing age group	.017	.017	-.060	.329
Competition social development	.251	.049	.265	.000[a]
Competition to win	.136	.063	.116	.032[b]
Competition for fitness	.146	.078	.180	.060
R =	R^2 = .141			
F = 9.237				
Model #2: DV: Motivation to compete				
Sex	-.016	.049	-.016	.749
Number of competitions	.031	.026	.061	.222
Years registered	.005	.003	.091	.136
Competing age group	-.013	.011	-.077	.205
Travel for stimulation	.154	.031	.280	.000[a]
Travel for escape	.071	.031	.130	.022[b]
R =	R^2 = .140			
F = 11.655				

[a] Significant at $p < .001$ level

[b] Significant at $p < .05$ level

There were strong relationships between the motivating factors in predicting travel and competition behaviors. It may be that the swim teams and clubs were the ones who organized trips to the championships and that played a role in individual decisions whether to attend. This was illustrated by the role that competing for social development had on the motivation to travel to the event. Although the motivating influences of participating in the event for social development were items borrowed from the PMQ and thus were hypothesized to be related to the motivation to compete, these also were used in travel motivation research. The desire to be with others, such as their swim teammates and working together, appeared in travel-related motivation theories (Pearce, 1991; Uysal & Jurowski, 1993).

The idea of traveling to be with others while participating in a swimming event merits further investigation. To increase participation at future events, the USMS Short Course Championship organizers perhaps should market the championships to chartered swim clubs across the country to capitalize on the strong motivation to travel with their teammates. Event organizers could stress the creation of team and club packages and discounts for registration if they bring more members of their team or club to the event.

Moreover, the mere fact this was a championship event and the participants would be swimming against only the best in their events served as a major motivating factor for traveling to the event. The image of this championship event itself served as a powerful motivator. A participant commented that many more swimmers were planning on attending the 2007 championships because it would be in an indoor swimming facility. The indoor facility, it was stated, fostered a more competitive type of environment. The organizers of this event also may want to focus their marketing efforts on the "championship" image of the event. Participants who attend and medal in events should be marketed to consider themselves the "best of the best."

Conclusion

Future research should continue to explore these relationships between travel behavior and the sport participation. Individuals' past and accumulated experiences as well as their motivations to travel for their sport is an under-researched area in the literature. The travel career ladder model might prove useful in marketing other types of events such as regional swim events in which the competition factor may not play a large motivational role. The motivations of the adult sport participant also have other practical considerations such as relationships to their professional work schedules. Swimming has the potential to be a lifelong activity because the physical requirements of many other sports limit participation as people age. Adults have more discretionary income and have the potential to produce greater economic impacts than do age group swimmers. Finally, an understanding of the motivations for Masters swimming participants should allow event directors and aquatic facility managers to create experiences that are optimized for positive impacts for adult participants. Therefore, adults who have a good experience will relate their positive feelings by word of mouth to others and entice greater participation and attendance at a specific facility or for the sport generally in the future.

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